



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Division of Public Health

What Town of Blades and area residents need to know about their drinking water

Background

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) had been working with the US Environmental Protection Agency to determine if there was a potential for the Town of Blades drinking water wells to contain perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) due to manufacturing processes that have historically operated in the area. DNREC undertook water testing and discovered an elevated level of PFCs above EPA's established human health advisory. DNREC and the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) began notifying the Town of Blades February 8, 2018 out of an abundance of caution for residents not to drink water from the town's municipal wells.

Current status of Town of Blades and area private wells drinking water supply

DNREC and DPH began providing bottled water and water trucked in by the Delaware National Guard February 9, 2018, to Town of Blades and area residents for drinking and cooking. This action was taken after DNREC testing discovered the elevated level of PFCs, a large group of man-made chemicals used in industry and consumer products, in the town's wells. PFCs do not occur naturally, but are widespread in the environment and are found in people, wildlife, and fish.

Next steps

DNREC is working to install a temporary carbon treatment system for the Blades water distribution system that will remove PFCs and ensure Blades drinking water is below the EPA's human health advisory.

Q&A's

Q. How long has DNREC known that the Town of Blades' municipal wells contained perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) at a level above the national health advisory?

A. DNREC received final results Feb. 7 about elevated level of PFCs in Blades' drinking water.

Q. When did DNREC sample these wells before?

A. This is the first time DNREC has sampled for PFCs. These chemicals are not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act, therefore they are not part of the water systems' routine sampling for such chemicals as lead.

Q. Why did DNREC sample the wells at this time?

A. DNREC sampled the Blades wells in coordination with EPA because of their proximity to potential sources of PFCs from historical industrial processes in the area.

Q. What are the concentrations (of PFOS) from the water sampled by DNREC?

A. All three municipal drinking water wells exceeded the national health advisory of combined PFOs/PFOA of 70 parts per trillion (70/ppt). These ranged from 96.2/ppt to 187.1/ppt.

Q. What are the next steps by DNREC and DPH in addressing the situation in Blades?

A. Drinking water will continue to be provided between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. to Blades and area residents by bottled water and by tankers from the Delaware National Guard. DNREC is working to obtain a temporary carbon treatment system for the Blades water distribution system that will remove PFCs and ensure Blades drinking water is below the human health advisory level.

Q. Where can drinking water provided by DNREC and DPH be picked up by Blades and area residents?

A. Water can be obtained daily starting Saturday, Feb. 10, from 7 a.m.-10 p.m. at the Blades Fire Hall, 200 E. 5th St.

Q. How long will DNREC and DPH continue to provide an alternative source of drinking and cooking water for Blades and area residents?

A. Until a permanent solution is found that reduces PFCs in Blades' drinking water to an acceptable level.

Q. What are some of the concerns affiliated with these chemicals?

A. There are some health concerns, primarily associated with long-term exposures. According to the Agencies for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the effects can include impacts on growth, learning and behavior of children, lowering a woman's chance of getting pregnant, interfering with the body's natural hormones, increasing cholesterol levels, affecting the immune system and increasing the risk of cancer. There is limited evidence of the effects, as more research is needed, but the water restrictions are being put in place to end exposures.

Q. When will I know if my water is safe to drink?

A. Once DNREC has installed the carbon filtration system, the water coming out of that system will be tested, both for the presence of bacteria in the water, as well as for the presence of PFOS/PFOA. It will take approximately one week for results to come back. Once results have been returned, DPH will notify DNREC and will work with the Town of Blades to notify residents when the water is safe to drink.

Q. How will I know that my water remains safe from PFOS/PFOA?

A. Once it is determined that the water is again safe to drink, DPH will work with the Town of Blades to develop a routine monitoring plan for the presences of PFOS/PFOA.

Q. I have a private well. Who should I contact for information on sampling and treatment options?

A. Rick Galloway, project officer, DNREC Site Investigation & Restoration Section, 302-395-2600.

Q. Who should I call for more information on drinking water in the Blades area?

A. With environmental questions, please contact Rick Galloway, project officer, DNREC Site Investigation & Restoration Section, at 302-395-2600. For public health-related questions, please contact Jamie Mack, Division of Public Health, at 302-745-0076.

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